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News release on electoral college reform urged by South Dakota Senator Karl E. Mundt, 1960 November 15

Strom Thurmond

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 15: Senator Karl E. Mundt (R-SD) said this morning, "An outmoded, outdated, antiquated Electoral College in all probability will give Jack Kennedy the White House while a nationwide popular vote may yet go to the loser in this year's Presidential contest.

"In addition, it seems clear the winning Presidential candidate will owe his victory to a majority received in a small number of large metropolitan cities in this country.

"I have been introducing and re-introducing resolutions and amendments on the subject of Electoral College reform for ten years," the Senator stated. "And I am hopeful that after last Tuesday's election, the American people finally will realize that as it now stands, the only votes with any real bearing on the outcome apparently hinge on the big city, big state returns.

"With this in mind, I am positively planning to re-introduce appropriate legislation in the 87th Congress convening this January."

Mundt, relaxing in South Dakota after a successful and vigorous campaign for a third Senate term over Democrat Congressman George McGovern, said he definitely has secured the support of Senator Strom Thurmond, (D-SC) and he hopes other Senators will join him in presenting his Electoral College reform proposal next year.

(The South Dakotan's proposed legislation differs from the old Lodge-Gossett amendment in that it does not permit 40 percent of the Electoral College to elect the President and Vice President.

It also eliminates the concept of proportional voting which might then be expanded and which has done much to sterilize Democratic (MORE)
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processes in such countries as Italy and France.

Basically, Mundt's proposal is this:

1. Set up a system of electoral districts apart from the various Congressional Districts in order to eliminate the so-called gerrymandering in favor of one party or another. (Electoral districts would be of the same size and be contiguous and thus omit the gerrymander factor.)

2. Choose two of each State's electors at-large. The State's remaining electors would be elected by people in single-member districts composed of contiguous and compact territory and containing as nearly as practicable the number of persons which entitles the State to one Representative in the Congress.

3. If no person voted for as President or Vice President received a majority of the whole number of electors chosen, the election would be determined by a Senate and House quorum from the three top candidates for President and Vice President, as the particular case may be.

Mundt believes this system would force candidates for President to "appeal to voters on issues which have national appeal instead of special interest appeal."

It would also lessen the dominating influence which the big city political machines, the tightly organized pressure groups of metropolitan areas, the hyphenated American organizations, the AFL-CIO and other groups operating in the big cities now have in determining Presidential elections.

Candidates would be compelled to campaign in every section of the country since each election district would be equally important and would mean each individual citizen would have the same "vote impact" regardless of the area in which he lived.

Thus, a citizen of New York State would no longer vote for 45 electors carrying 15 times the "election weight" of an individual voter in Hawaii or Delaware who now votes for three electors.

Again, taking New York as the example, by breaking up the "electoral unit" of the 45 New York votes into some division of say 27 for one party and 18 for another, it would reduce the "swing power" of that state to around nine or 10 votes.

These would be offset in turn by votes cast in rural States of (MORE)
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the North or the South and would no longer make it mandatory to nominate
the President from the eight or so major States of the Union.

Candidates for the high office would no longer be forced to
yield to all the pressures and policies promulgated by the mass voting
block of those States.

Mundt feels his proposal, patterned after the old Mundt-Coudert
plan of several years ago, would remove the high political premium on
one-vote pluralities in big-city States.

"The present inordinate power of organized pressure groups in
the big-city States would be reduced to proper proportions," he added.

Capable men from all States -- regardless of size -- would real­
istically be eligible for President and Vice President if the Mundt plan
became a part of the Constitution.

The plan, additionally, would be a strong wedge in the important
business of realigning political parties and developing a two-party system
in all States.

Those within a certain party would ultimately have greater
homology and no longer have the bizarre distinction whereby today differ­
ences between members of the same party are frequently more pronounced
than distinction between members of the two major parties.

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(Thurmond previously co-authored a similar proposed amendment with Mundt on Electoral reform in 1957 and introduced a plan of his own in 1955. In 1956, a compromise of the Mundt, Thurmond and Daniel plans won a majority vote in the Senate but failed to get the required two-thirds vote.)